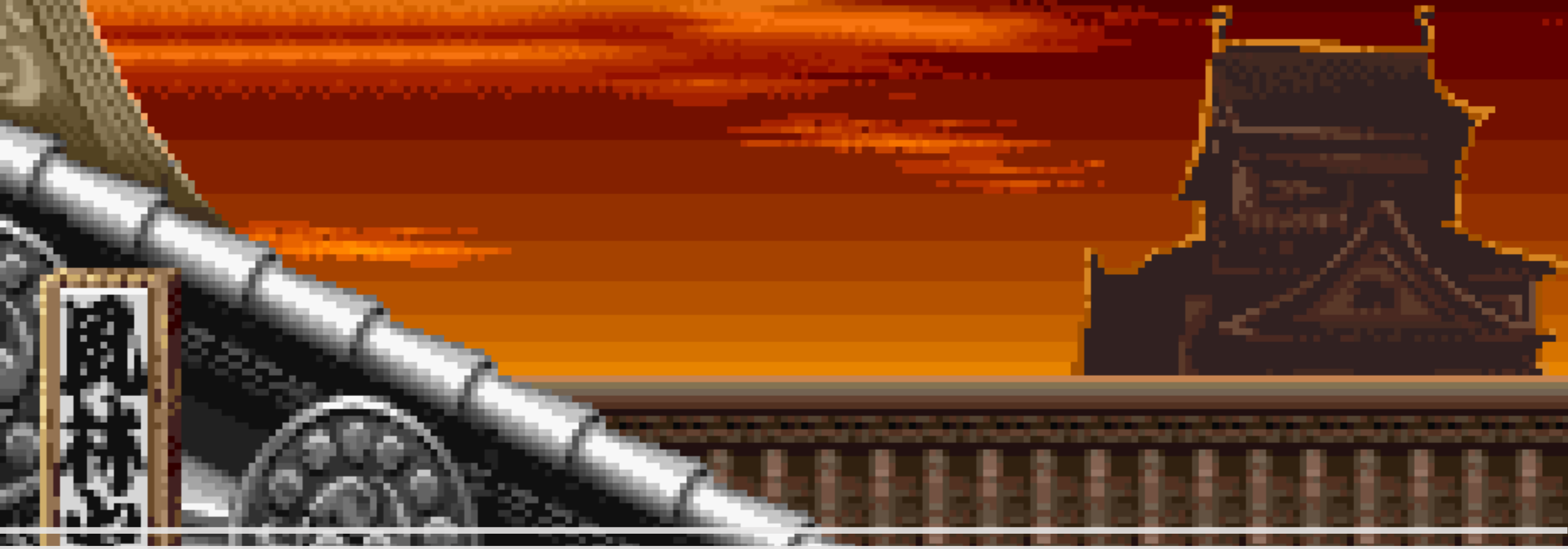


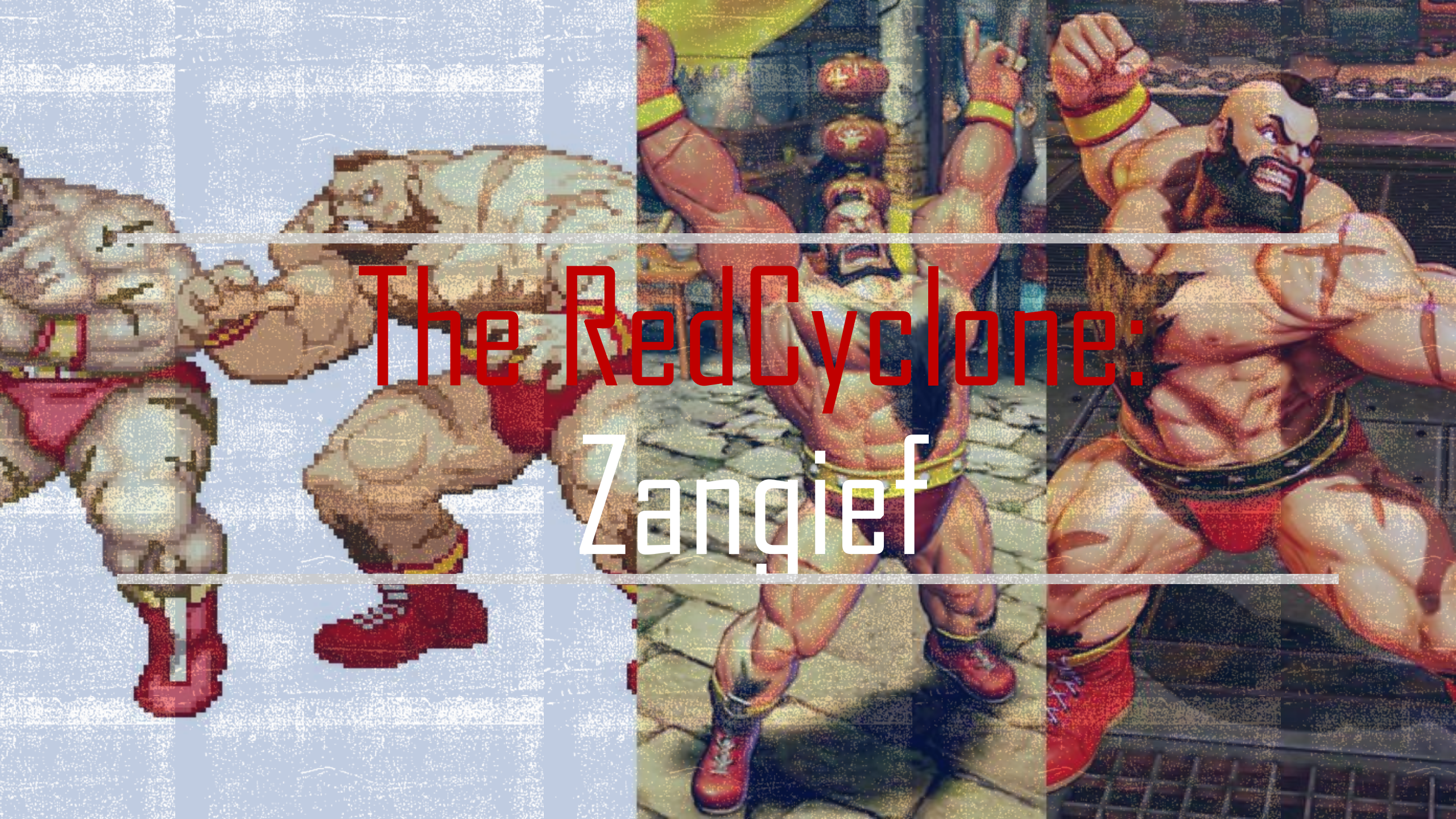
Street Fighter:
Soft Power Behind Hard Punches

A brief recap of Street Fighter

- Created in 1987 and released by Capcom Street Fighter was created.
- Made as a fighting game following Ryu, a Japanese martial artists, the game exploded in popularity following the release of Street Fighter II in 1991.
- Featuring a whole new cast of elaborate characters, SF II allowed for players to travel the world, taking on the country's best fighters to achieve victory
- Since 1987, over 40 Street Fighter games or games including original SF characters have been released, making SF the highest grossing video game franchise of all time!

Now Here's The Problem...

- With its international rise to fame, also came Street Fighter's rapid accumulation of "Soft Power", or power/influence that is not rooted in military might (usually economic or cultural influence).
- Street Fighter games allowed for people all over the world to experience individuals from parts of the world they would probably never experience, however…its representation of individuals from other countries was based largely on stereotypes. In this presentation, we will be looking at some of the characters from the iconic series and how these portrayals may be problematic.



The RedCyclone:

Zangief

Zangief

- Originally classified as a resident of the USSR, Zangief is recognized as the pride of Russia and a national hero.
- With the nickname "The Red Cyclone" as direct homage to his background, Zangief's image has become internationally recognized since his official introduction in Street Fighter II

Stereotypes Present:

- Nationalistic
- Hyper-Masculine
- Hyper-Aggressive/Brutish
- Vain
- Very Serious

The Pugnacious Power Puncher:
Balrog

Balrog

- Based directly off of African-American boxing legend, Mike Tyson, Balrog is the primary muscle of Shadaloo, the main antagonist organization throughout much of the franchise and the only African-American in the franchise
- Since his official introduction in Street fighter II, Balrog has grown to become the character that fans "love to hate" thanks to his attitude, cockiness, and trash-talk

Stereotypes Present

- Hyper-Aggressive
- Lazy
- Greedy
- Boastful/Vain
- Angry
- Materialistic

The Great Yoga Master:
Dhalsim

Dhalsim

- Introduced in Street Fighter II, Dhalsim's mile-long limbs and Yoga-based fire moves have made him one of the most unforgettable faces of the franchise.
- As a Monk/Yogi, Dhalsim fights for his impoverished homeland through his use of moves adapted and learned through meditation, yoga, and martial arts

Stereotypes Present:

- Impoverished
- Spiritual (To an extreme degree)
- Sage-like
- Stoic
- Inhuman patience/enlightenment

And the list goes on…

In conclusion…

By presenting individuals from around the world based on stereotypical representation, Street Fighter creates a problematic situation in which people from one area are given an inaccurate representation of another region and it's people. Street Fighter's trans-media ability, coupled with it's international fame, allow it to have a very strong soft power in which it is able to influence an idea or view of a topic without military power…whether the view is correct or not.

Thank you!

Resources Used

- Opening Slide Background Image- https://legendsoflocalization.com/tag/street-fighter-ii-game/
- Slide 2: Street Fighter II Character -

http://streetfighter.wikia.com/wiki/File:Sfiiflash.jpg

- Slide 3/4 Background Image -

http://entertainment.ie/gaming/Pics-Heres-the-real-life-locations-of-Street-Fighter-IIs-stages/387086.htm

- Slide #5, #7, #9 Background Image -

https://www.ibtimes.co.uk/street-fighter-5-ryu-ken-chun-li-other-iconic-fighters-through-ages-1543995

- Slide #6 Background Image -
- Slide #8 Image

https://streetfighter.com/characters/balrog/

- Slide #10 Image -

https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwiH75Lw8OjdAhVmsFQKHV4aCCMQjRx6BAgBEAU&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3D6wsp0EFdRIU&psig=AOvVaw2BDdDbVAyS7wjMRQu0_HHZ&ust=1538608340950853

- Slide #11 Background-

https://www.deviantart.com/eastmonkey/art/street-fighter-IV-102794406

- Slide #12 Background-

https://www.teepublic.com/posters-and-art/street-fighter-5